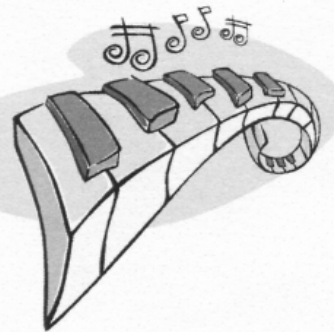




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Announcing:

By Marilyn Lowe



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Why do many adults who have taken piano lessons for years report that they cannot sight-read, learn new music easily, or play by ear? Why do students fear playing without music notation in front of them? Why do students find improvising challenging? Why do many children drop piano lessons after only a few years of study—before they have developed a playing skill? Why are piano/keyboard sales down?

The answer: traditional beginning piano instruction—"teaching from notation"—does not develop audiation skills. Audiation is a way of thinking about music, just as we think ideas. The foundation for how to think about music and what to listen for is established during beginning lessons.

Music Moves for Piano is a new piano method based on Music Learning Theory (MLT) and published in cooperation with Edwin E. Gordon. It is an instruction approach for beginning piano players and transfer students that focuses on teaching both how to audiate and how to play the piano. Tonal audiation and rhythm audiation develop creative, musical thinkers and are the cornerstones of *Music Moves for Piano*. Tonal and rhythm solfege are indispensable for learning how to audiate

and play by ear. Students learn to sing/chant, play/improvise, and read/write sequenced, categorized tonal and rhythm patterns throughout the multi-year course of lessons. In addition, short improvisation activities are an integral part of every lesson. Students improvise using rhythm patterns and tonal patterns. They make variations of familiar folk songs by transposing; changing tonality and meter; making melodic and rhythmic variations; arranging accompaniments; reharmonizing, and creating medleys. After more than 12 years of development and instruction, students who have used *Music Moves for Piano* show amazing long-term results. They enjoy playing the piano and, as adults who audiate, they have acquired lifelong, functional music skills.

A Historical Perspective

How did piano instruction become so reading-centered? For years, music was taught as an aural/oral art. Lowell Mason, a 19th-century American singing schoolmaster and hymn writer, wrote curriculum guidelines for the Boston public schools. The following is a summary of Mason's curriculum guidelines:

1. *Teach sound before sign.*
2. *Have students imitate rather than learn by explanation.*
3. *Teach one new thing at a time, such as rhythm or melody.*
4. *Sequence instruction and allow students to master one step before progressing to the next.*
5. *Have students first learn the skill, and then explain the theory.*

After World War I, when music ensembles became part of the public school curriculum, learning music from notation became popular. This led to the publication of beginning method books based on naming lines and spaces and counting.

During the 20th century, five prominent musicians recognized that something was wrong with music education and suggested

revolutionary changes. Edwin E. Gordon used his education in music, research, statistics, and psychology to build on the ideas of Orff, Kodaly, Suzuki, and Dalcroze. He developed MLT, or theories of audiation, for teaching music the way music is best learned, as a listening and performing art.

Incorporating MLT in Piano Lessons

Traditional beginning piano method books are not designed to help students learn how to audiate. This approach does not teach students categorized and sequenced tonal and rhythm patterns and their labels. A common belief is that students should learn to "read" music when they begin piano lessons by naming lines and spaces, identifying intervals and triads, and counting. However, when students decode music in this manner, an aural connection with the music is not developed, and audiation is stifled.

At 9 or 10 years of age, many students who have learned how to decode music notation become discouraged and stop piano lessons. When they can't learn music from notation by themselves, they get frustrated. If creativity is not fostered, students may not enjoy playing or performing.

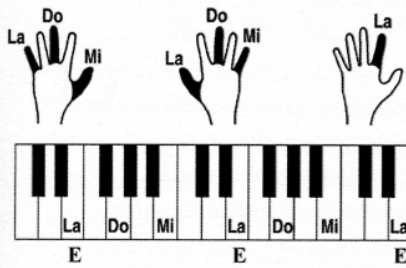
Audiation and keyboard skills are carefully nurtured in *Music Moves for Piano*. Students learn, in effect, two instruments: the audiation instrument (the ear and the mind) and the performing instrument (the piano). Students acquire an extensive tonal and rhythm pattern vocabulary and learn to perform comfortably and efficiently when they learn pieces by rote that are beyond their "reading" comprehension. The ear that audiates guides the fingers.

Young children learn how to audiate more quickly than they can learn physically how to play the piano. They also learn best through body movement and activity-oriented games that make lessons fun and develop audiation skills. Body movement



Music Moves for Piano

Tonic Arpeggio



When DO is G then LA is E

develops rhythm audiation and singing develops tonal audiation. Older students and adults also enjoy activity-oriented games and should learn how to audiate while they learn keyboard skills.

With this aural approach, students are usually encouraged by their progress and enjoy making music. As their ability to audiate improves, they apply their knowledge, with guidance, to the printed page and begin to read music notation. Sound to notation develops strong readers and fluent players. Some students are natural readers, some need practice understanding printed notation, and others have physical characteristics that prevent them from focusing on or tracking music notes. Students in the latter category may become great musicians without reading music notation; others will become frustrated if they are expected to do something they are unable to do. These students benefit from knowing how to audiate and developing improvisation skills.

How to Get Started

The *Music Moves for Piano* curriculum provides appropriate music and activities for students to learn how to improvise, play by ear, arrange music, write music notation, compose, and listen to music with understanding. Creative activities are playful and fun-like. Both the teacher and the student are encouraged to be creative in expanding or omitting some of the many activities that are possible with short pieces and songs.

Both lesson scheduling and activities

need to be carefully planned to ensure a variety of contrasting, sequenced activities each week. Because most piano lessons are weekly, students benefit from longer lessons. Teachers can schedule lessons that are from 45 to 60 minutes long by overlapping students or by grouping two, three, or four students together. The students do not always have to be of the same age or level of instruction as long as the teacher adapts the activities and performance pieces to individual differences. Students learn from each other and enjoy group interaction. Of course, *Music Moves for Piano* also works with one-on-one lessons and larger group lessons as well.

Prepared unit lesson plans for the teacher, *Teachers Lesson Plans*, accompany each student book and help keep the sequenced instruction on course. Planned activities provide the necessary readiness, repetition, and reinforcement that make future lessons successful. They also ensure that students learn how to audiate. Structured lesson plans allow the teacher to be flexible and meet each student's needs.

Purposeful activities away from the keyboard, preferably standing, help students learn how to audiate according to the level of their music aptitudes. An essential part of every lesson, these activities can be grouped together in a 10- to 15-minute activity time or alternated with keyboard activities. The goal is to keep the tone light and game-like. Students of all ages enjoy singing, chanting, and movement. Activities include performance piece preparation and games using patterns. Songs and chants in major and minor tonalities and duple and triple meters as well as in other tonalities and meters are included for acculturation.

The following is a suggested outline for a lesson. Body movement activities are often combined with singing and chanting. Songs for movement and singing eventually are performance pieces. Students learn that they can play what they can sing. Readiness activities are sequenced into the core curriculum and les-

son plans.

Music Moves for Piano Performance Pieces

The *Music Moves for Piano* performance piece curriculum includes many short, contrasting game-like pieces that use the whole range of the keyboard, ensemble/improvisation music, and solo repertoire.

SUGGESTED LESSON OUTLINE

I. Activities Away from the Keyboard

(Note that songs and chants are without words.)

A. Duple meter song or chant followed by duple meter rhythm pattern instruction.

B. Body movement activities (pulsating and continuous-fluid) while the teacher sings contrasting songs that will later be piano performance pieces.

C. Song in the tonality of pattern instruction followed by tonal pattern instruction.

D. Triple meter song or chant followed by triple meter pattern instruction.

E. "Song to Sing" patterns and singing by students for the current lesson unit.

II. Keyboard Activities

A. Activities for getting acquainted with the keyboard and developing technique.

B. Exploration, creativity, and improvisation activities.

C. Performance piece review.

III. New Performance Piece Introduction

The core curriculum is based on folk songs. Common folk song repertoire encourages singing, chanting, and movement and is used to develop improvisation skills throughout the six volumes of student books. Pieces and song arrangements are sequenced to develop keyboard skills. Students grow technically and musically as they learn scales, arpeggios, and primary cadences in all keyalities and tonalities. One can only read in a keyality/tonality that one

Music Moves for Piano (continued from p. 9)

can play. Playing with ease precedes reading.

Solo repertoire music is learned by rote for several years. Audiation skills are applied to the learning of all music. During the lessons, students study the following for each piece: the tonality, meter, essential tonal and rhythm patterns, harmonic changes, and the phrase structure and form. They also identify patterns and look for same/different contrasts and repetitions in the music notation.

With rote pieces, the teacher can carefully nurture keyboard skills and avoid the mindlessness that often happens when playing a fixed-pitched instrument by "finger memory." Piano performance uses complex motor skills. Looking at music distracts students and can prevent them from developing coordinated movement. Without notation, students are able to look at their hands and think, feel, and watch how they play. They can sense arm movement. From the beginning, students avoid developing bad habits, such as twisting, stretching, reaching, gripping, pushing, shoving, curling fingers, tightening the shoulder and elbow joints, and letting joints and knuckles collapse.

Beginning students are often discouraged when expected to play with their hands together. Two-handed playing

requires both physical coordination and stereophonic listening to two or more voices (such as melody and accompaniment) produced at the same time. In *Music Moves for Piano*, pieces played with two hands first use alternating movement or motives that are echoed. For pieces with a melody and an accompaniment, it is easier to play left-hand parts that are single notes rather than intervals or chords. This helps students hear chord changes. Playing right-hand melodies with the left hand develops left-hand technique. Ensemble playing encourages keeping a consistent tempo and provides a feeling of success because the sound is rich and full.

Printed tonal syllables are placed on fingers and keyboards for pieces and cadences. This helps students learn the tonal syllables and think about the resting tone, starting tone, and tonality. They also learn to hear and apply the tonal patterns to the music notation because the keyboard and hand "pictures" help students transfer the sound to notation. The accompanying CD, with recordings of songs and pieces along with their essential tonal and rhythm patterns, helps students study at home. They listen to the music and echo the patterns. Student method books are successful without color and illustrations because they have the necessary infor-

mation needed to learn the music.

They are music workbooks. Students from kindergarten age to adults, beginners and transfers, can all learn how to audiate and play the piano with appropriate instructional material.

Developing musical thinking through tonal audiation and rhythm audiation activities takes years of study and application. In six books of instruction, *Music Moves for Piano* applies MLT by providing appropriate, sequenced material for learning how to audiate and perform. With MLT, students are creative, confident musical thinkers and acquire lifelong, functional music skills that they are able to use in a variety of ways. They are excited about music and are strong supporters of music in their homes and communities.

Marilyn Lowe has taught piano for more than 40 years. She has performed as a piano and organ soloist, as a pianist with the Fine Arts Trio in Columbia, Missouri, and as an ensemble player with many college and university faculty members. Active in local and state music organizations, she was a founding member of the Springfield Area Arts Council and the Springfield Piano Teachers Forum.

Lowe served two years as Convention Chair and two years as President of the Missouri Music Teachers Association. She has made presentations on the topics of composition, improvisation, and audiation at local, state, and national conferences, including the World Piano Pedagogy Conference and the Music Teachers National Association Conferences.

Lowe's academic credits include degrees in liberal arts and piano (cum laude, Phi Beta Kappa) from Knox College in Galesburg, Illinois, and a master's degree with distinction, in piano, from Indiana University, Bloomington. She completed additional graduate study in organ and music theory at Indiana University.

When DO is G then LA is E **Tonic-Dominant-Tonic Melodic Cadence**

The diagram illustrates the Tonic-Dominant-Tonic Melodic Cadence for the key of G major (where Do is G and La is E). It shows three stages of the cadence with corresponding hand positions and keyboard diagrams.

- Tonic Minor (i):** Hand position shows La (4th finger), Do (5th finger), and Mi (3rd finger). The keyboard diagram shows G (Do), A (La), and B (Mi) with an arrow pointing from A to G.
- Dominant Harmonic Minor (V):** Hand position shows Si (2nd finger), Ti (1st finger), Re (3rd finger), and Mi (4th finger). The keyboard diagram shows F# (Si), G (Ti), A (Re), and B (Mi) with an arrow pointing from B to G.
- Tonic Minor (i):** Hand position shows La (4th finger) and Do (5th finger). The keyboard diagram shows G (Do) and A (La) with an arrow pointing from A to G.

Arrows between the stages indicate the melodic movement: from Tonic Minor (i) to Dominant Harmonic Minor (V) and back to Tonic Minor (i).